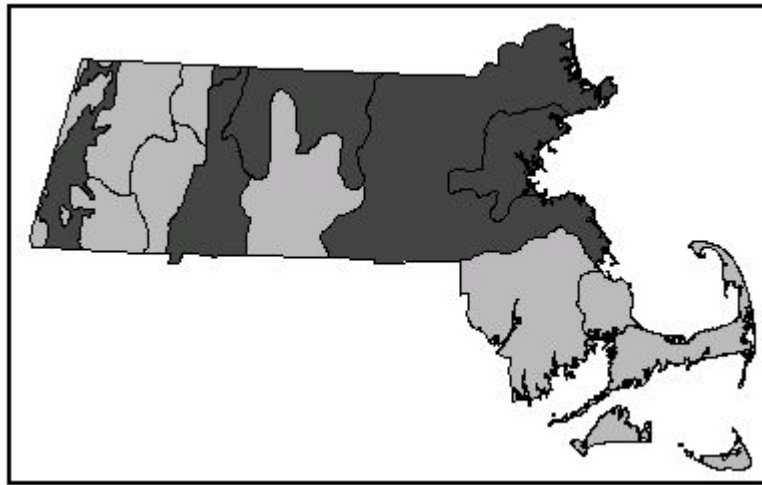


Community Name: WET MEADOW
Community ELCODE: CP2A0A2000
SRANK: S4



Concept: Graminoid/emergent herbaceous communities that are similar to deep and shallow emergent marshes except that they are temporarily rather than seasonally flooded. The soil is saturated during the growing season but not generally inundated. Repeated disturbance, usually from grazing or mowing, keeps these communities open.

Environmental setting: Wet meadows occur in lake basins, wet depressions, along streams, and in sloughs and other backwater areas with impeded drainage along rivers. The mucky mineral soils are permanently saturated and flood occasionally; standing water is not present throughout the growing season as in deep and shallow emergent marshes. As these communities flood only temporarily, continued disturbance is necessary to prevent encroachment by woody plants. More information is needed on the physical and biological characteristics of wet meadow and marsh communities.

Vegetation Description: Tussock-forming sedges, such as tussock-sedge (*Carex stricta*) or marsh-sedge (*Carex lacustris*), are often dominant, with over 50% of the cover, with variable proportions of other graminoids and herbaceous species. Canada bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis* var. *canadensis*), wool-grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), slender woolly-fruited sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa* var. *americana*), slender spike-sedge (*Eleocharis tenuis*), stalked wool-grass (*Scirpus pedicellatus*), rice cut-grass (*Leersia oryzoides*), and brown beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora capitellata*) are typical of wet meadows. Characteristic herbaceous associates include erect water smartweed (*Polygonum amphibium* var. *emersum*), pickerel-weed (*Pontederia cordata* var. *cordata*), river-horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), nodding bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), spotted joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), northern blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), and sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*). Calcareous wet meadows have calciphilic species, including red-footed spike-sedge (*Eleocharis erythropoda*), delicate sedge (*Carex leptalea*), fen-sedge (*Carex tetanica*), and beaked-sedge (*Carex utriculata*). More information is also needed on calcareous wet meadows in order to clarify their relationship to calcareous sloping fens and calcareous seepage marshes [both of which are described in the calcareous peatlands section due to their accumulation of peat]. Wet meadows are very closely related to shallow emergent marshes, but typically have more uniform vegetation, i.e., often a single sedge species dominates. Wet meadows are called "sedge meadows" in many other states, but "wet meadow" is used in Massachusetts because of known occurrences of meadows dominated by rice cut-grass and other non-sedge species.

Associations: No associations have been described in Massachusetts.

Habitat values for Associated Fauna: Wet meadows can function as vernal pool habitat if water remains standing for 2-3 months; these areas provide important amphibian breeding habitat.

Associated rare plants:

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------|
| CAREX ALOPECOIDEA | FOXTAIL SEDGE | T |
| CAREX BUSHII | BUSH'S SEDGE | E |
| CAREX BUXBAUMII | BUXBAUM'S SEDGE | - WL |
| CAREX EXILIS | BOG-SEDE | - WL |

From: Swain, P.C. & J.B. Kearsley. 2001. Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Version 1.3. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. Westborough, MA.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------|
| CAREX HAYDENII | HAYDEN'S SEDGE | - WL |
| CAREX SCHWEINITZII | SCHWEINITZ'S SEDGE | E |
| CAREX TRICHOCARPA | HAIRY-FRUITED SEDGE | T |
| ELEOCHARIS OBTUSA VAR OVATA | OVATE SPIKE-SEDGE | E |
| ELEOCHARIS ERYTHROPODA | RED-FOOTED SPIKE-SEDGE | -WL |
| GENTIANA CRINITA | FRINGED GENTIAN | - WL |
| OPHIOGLOSSUM PUSILLUM | ADDER'S-TONGUE FERN | T |
| PEDICULARIS LANCEOLATA | SWAMP LOUSEWORT | E |
| PLATANThERA FLAVA VAR HERBIOLA | PALE GREEN ORCHIS | T |
| SCIRPUS LONGII | LONG'S BULRUSH | E |
| SCIRPUS PENDULUS | PENDULOUS BULRUSH | - WL |

Associated rare animals:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| AMBYSTOMA JEFFERSONIANUM | JEFFERSON SALAMANDER | SC |
| AMBYSTOMA LATERALE | BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER | SC |
| AMBYSTOMA OPACUM | MARBLED SALAMANDER | T |
| AMMODRAMUS HENSLOWII | HENSLOW'S SPARROW | E |
| BARTRAMIA LONGICAUDA | UPLAND SAND PIPER | E |
| BOTAURUS LENTIGINOSUS | AMERICAN BITTERN | E |
| CIRCUS CYANEUS | NORTHERN HARRIER | T |
| DESMOCERUS PALLIATUS | ELDERBERRY LONG-HORNED BEETLE | SC |
| EULIMNADIA AGASSIZII | AGASSIZ'S CLAM SHRIMP | E |
| HEMIDACTYLIUM SCUTATUM | FOUR-TOED SALAMANDER | SC |
| LIMNADIA LENTICULARIS | AMERICAN CLAM SHRIMP | SC |
| SCAPHIOPUS HOLBROOKII | EASTERN SPADEFOOT | T |
| SYNAPTOMYS COOPERI | SOUTHERN BOG LEMMING | SC |

Examples with Public Access:

White Brook; Russell Cove, Hadley.

Threats:

Wet meadows are threatened by filling and dredging, and by nutrient inputs from adjacent roads, fields, or septic systems. The invasion and spread of purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) alters community structure and composition.

Management needs:

Efforts are needed to control the spread of purple loosestrife. Continue activity that has kept the community open, e.g., fall mowing.

Synonyms

USNVC/TNC:

??

MA [old name]:

Southern New England nutrient-rich streamside/lakeside marsh [CP4A1A0000].

ME:

Sedge meadow community.

VT:

Sedge meadow.

NH:

Shallow emergent marsh [which they have subdivided into 5 subtypes: reed-grass meadow; tussock sedge meadow, medium sedge meadow, bulrush meadow, short graminoid-forb marsh].

NY:

Sedge meadow.

CT:

Not described.

RI:

Not described.

Golet & Larson, 1974:

Ungrazed meadow (M-1); grazed meadow (M-2).

Author:

J. Kearsley

Date:

7/21/99